(ii) Government of Bihar has agreed for arranging lifting of soft coke through nominated persons/ agencies.

(iii) Steam coal in lieu of soft coke has also been offered to Bihar as domestic fuel.

(iv) Coal India Limited has given linkages for briquetting and SSF units in the State of Bihar for manufacture of briquettes and smokeless fuel.

(v) A low temperature coal carbonisation plant has been set up at Dankuni near Calcutta which produces CILCOKE. This has a much higher heat value as compared to Soft Coke and is an ideal fuel for domestic use. Efforts are being made through the State Government to popularise the use of CILCOKE for domestic consumption.

Proposal to Join Regional Trade Boards

*100. SHRI VISHWASRAO RAMRAO PATIL:
SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any pro posal to favour joining regional trading blocks, as a recognition of the prevailing trends in the world trading system;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that Government are considering to join ASEAN for trading;

(d) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(e) if not, what are the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) There is no proposal for India to join a regional trading bloc.

(c) and (d) here is no proposal for India seeking membership of the ASEAN. Both India and ASEAN have, however, decided upon establishing a sectoral dialogue relationship covering such areas as trading, investment and tourism. The aim of this exercise is to promote trade and economic exchanges between the two sides within the Multilateral Trading System established under the GATT.

(e) India prefers the multilateral to the regional approach. Our efforts have been to strengthen multilateralism during the Uruguay Round as it is believed that non-discriminatory trade offers the greatest promise for expansion of world trade.

Withdrawal of Ration Cards from Tax Payers

679. SHRI SHANTI TYAGI:
SHRI SURESH KALMADI:
DR. BAPU KALDATE:
DR. SANJAYA SINH:

Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to exclude the tax payers from purchase of subsidised food grains through the public distribution system;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether Government have received any protest against this move from self-employed and salaried persons, if so, the details thereof; and

(d) what is the likely impact of such move on food subsidy and also on the self-employed, middle and salaried class people who are paying small amounts of tax and reeling under the relentless rising cost and inflation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION WITH ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED): (a) to (d) At the 14th meeting of the Advisory Council on Public Distribution System held in July, 1992,